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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7196  
INFO RUEHKS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1196  
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 8251  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1469  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1654  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2080  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 0135  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

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SIPDIS

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/RSP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS  
DEPT FOR EB/IFD/OMA  
DEPT ALSO FOR OES/IET AND OES/ETC/TED  
TREASURY FOR IA-SETH SEARLS  
COMMERCE FOR 4430/GOLIKE

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SUBJECT: ASEAN SECRETARIAT'S POST-SUMMIT READOUT

1. (SBU) Summary. In an ASEAN Summit debrief, Secretariat officials stated that the member countries were frustrated that the press focused too much on ASEAN's handling of Burma, taking attention away from the historic importance of the Charter signing. Dhannan Sunoto, Director of the Secretariat's Bureau of External Affairs, maintained however that the member countries acted appropriately in letting Burma participate in the Summit and sign the Charter, and that they were maintaining pressure on their fellow member while keeping it engaged. Sunoto continued to predict that not all member countries would ratify the Charter by next year's Summit deadline, and worried that member country governments would "play politics" over issues such as Burma, using the Charter as a bargaining chip. He did not worry, though, that the situation in Burma would impede economic integration efforts or trade negotiations with dialogue partners because of ASEAN's ability to negotiate deals among and as a sub-group of its members ("ASEAN Minus X"). In a brief readout of the ASEAN-EU Summit, which followed the ASEAN Summit itself, Sunoto expressed some frustration that the EU did not send appropriate representation. End Summary.

#### BURMA SITUATION OVERSHADOWS IMPORTANT MILESTONE

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2. (SBU) Sunoto expressed frustration on behalf of the Secretariat and member countries that the media focused more on ASEAN's handling of Burma rather than the historic importance of the charter signing. He said the coverage of the Summit was especially disappointing for Singapore, who, as the host, wanted to highlight the Charter and the planned ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

3. (SBU) Sunoto continued that ASEAN acted appropriately in allowing Burma to sign the Charter. Burma had to be included in order to maintain a sense of solidarity with ASEAN. The reason that ASEAN even exists, he explained, is that it maintains a core principle of non-interference in member countries' domestic affairs. Sunoto acknowledged that in order for the organization to implement the Charter principles, this policy would have to change, but that this would have to happen gradually.

14. (SBU) Sunoto pointed out that member countries were already starting to slowly move away from the non-interference principle, citing their public condemnation of the Burmese government's actions to date. He also felt that the junta's current cooperation with the UN was partly the result of ASEAN pressure. Member countries have started to realize that, although they do not want to interfere in Burma's domestic affairs, Burma's domestic affairs are starting to interfere with ASEAN, and the organization needs to address that fact.

#### ASEAN CHARTER FACES A ROUGH RATIFICATION PROCESS

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15. (SBU) Sunoto continued to predict that not all member countries will be able to ratify the Charter by next year's Summit. He said that member countries that have separate executive and legislative branches, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, could have a more difficult time ratifying the Charter, as these legislatures have not had as much input into its contents as parliamentary governments in countries such as Thailand. Sunoto also expressed disappointment in Philippine President Arroyo, who recently said that her country would not ratify the Charter unless Burma demonstrates concrete steps towards democracy. He felt that she, and potentially other member country leaders, would "play politics" using the Charter as a bargaining chip to keep their constituents happy.

#### ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION WILL PROCEED

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16. (SBU) Sunoto did not worry that the situation in Burma or the economic disparity of ASEAN's members would hinder the group's efforts towards economic integration or complicate its ability to negotiate trade agreements with dialogue partners. He said that ASEAN can negotiate deals among or as a sub-group of its members ("ASEAN Minus X"). ASEAN can exclude countries such as Burma from agreements with outside entities who may object to its inclusion, such as the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) with the European Union. Similarly, ASEAN can take steps towards economic integration among the six or seven countries that are able to proceed immediately. Poorer members, such as Burma and Cambodia, can integrate later when they are ready. Once these excluded countries see the benefits that the more advanced members derive from economic integration or FTAs with dialogue partners, Sunoto explained, they will likely want to speed up reforms so that they too can participate and benefit.

#### ASEAN-EU SUMMIT: REPRESENTATIONAL ISSUES

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17. (SBU) In a brief readout of the ASEAN-EU Summit, which followed the ASEAN Summit itself, Sunoto expressed some frustration that the EU did not send appropriate representation. As an example he pointed out that an appropriate representative of the next EU Presidency, Slovenia, did not attend the Summit as expected. Sunoto said that this is a common occurrence, where ASEAN frequently sends higher level representatives to meetings with dialogue partners, but that the partners do not reciprocate. Member countries place a high importance on protocol and are insulted when they perceive that partners do not show the same regard for interactions with ASEAN.

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